

Building the New Society



The INDUSTRIAL UNIONIST

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Lay the Boss Off — It Makes More Sense

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in the Shell of the Old

Letter from America

**Gilbert Mers,
Houston, Texas.**

A gent called Blackie Vaughan put it this way, "I don't mind workin'. It's just that it takes up so much of my time."

We hear a godawful lot nowadays from the people who conduct studies and researches and survey about how the job is no longer interesting to the job-holder. The job lacks challenge; no creativity; it's a blind alley; and on and on. All right. I should think that in this new society we are working toward (we are working toward it, aren't we?) the enormous concentrations of manufacture would be dispersed into smaller ones, with the accent on skill of workmanship and integrity of product. Still, for the present, let's remember Blackie.

Was a time when men, women and children worked 10, 12 and more hours per day, six and more days per week, for marginal subsistence wages. It was the usual practice to give 'em Sundays off, when they were supposed to go to church and listen to the sky pilot thank God in their behalf for the bounty they enjoyed. But there were exceptions. Down in Terlingua, Texas, in a mercury mining operation the owner worked his hands seven days a week. When the local priest — the workers were Mexican and Catholic — interceded with the owner to allow Sundays off, the owner flew into such a blasphemous rage that the priest backed off, afraid that the owner would demolish his church. The time was the 20th century.

We went through many and bitter struggles to win the 8-hour day. Once the 8-hour day was established, pro-

ductivity went up. The worker produced more in eight hours than he had in 10 or 12. Machines began to eliminate many of the tasks formerly done by sheer muscle. Our life was becoming easier. So they said. They? Why, "they" are those who observe and write and talk about work; it would be insulting to ask them to do any.

Machines became faster. It was up to the worker to move faster as the machine moved faster. But the work wasn't hard any more. It wasn't? When you sit down to your next meal, before you shove up to the table, place the index finger of one hand lightly on the table beside your plate. Now move it, lightly again, to the other side of the plate. Now repeat those movements speedily. Faster, don't stop. Are you beginning to get a message?

The auto plant assembly line has come to be pictured as the most horrible example. Still, the assembly line worker is helping to create something. Without a whole lot more rhetoric, let's go back to what old Blackie said. If only the work day would end before mind and muscle blur into one big blob of nothingness, there's a fair-to-middling chance that work would come out less degrading. Give some thought to that.

Have a look at all those new cars rusting in the show rooms lots — and at laid-off workers doing the same. And give some thought to that.

"... so long as there is one hungry mouth on earth, I have not dined well." (who said it?)

A well-credentialed big-wig addressing a convention of the Institute of Financial Education (impressive, huh?) held here a short time ago said that people who cry doom are premature in giving up on the present social system. Do you sense a built-in declaration there that the System is headed down the drain, the relevant question being, when does it go?



Aerosol Sprays

Also in recent news a group of scientists were saying that the use of aerosol sprays may already have done such so much damage to the ozone as to pose a threat to (near) future human well-being, even life. Another group insists that there may be some danger, but says that research is much too incomplete to tell, declares the danger to be minimal, any present danger next to non-existent. Such conflicting declarations leave us bewildered and in the usual spot, between the proverbial rock and a hard place. This here layman has to harbor a stinking notion that scientists would come a hell of a lot closer to unanimity of opinion if the question of who pays for what opinion were erased. Better put: if opinions were not for sale.

The Dauntless Ones

Meanwhile the interests that make the pressurized spray products are undaunted by the hullabaloo. They are making a product and merchandising it at a profit, The American Way, they call it here, and there can be nothing wrong with it. But just supposing that there is an atmospheric danger involved? But no. You see, they believe

in God. And God has approved the economic system wherein they make pressurized products and realize a profit from them. They can produce priests, rabbis, preachers, just about any brand of sky pilot you want, thicker than ants on an ant-hill, to tell you that that is so. And God Works miracles. And they'll tell you that that is so.

Therefore, it being that God has approved their System, it follows that he'll see to it that a miracle will happen so that the environment doesn't become too deadly, or either that people will develop an immunity and survive the deadliness.

You must understand that it is not so much life and death that matters. That is not actually the prime concern. The prime thing is that God, in supporting the economic system that supports them, just wouldn't allow anything that would allow them to be without customers. Ya gott have faith.

That my friends, is the Conventional Wisdom. I'm an agnostic — but, for sake of argument; Wonder what God really does think of such an economic system; and the ecclesiastics who "give" it his endorsement?

The Industrial Unionist

The INDUSTRIAL UNIONIST is the official publication of the Industrial Workers of the World, British Section. Editors for the North and South are elected by the local membership of the IWW and are held responsible to the membership here, who currently define the job simply by saying that reasons must be given for rejecting any material refused publication, and that the editors are responsible for calling monthly meetings of all members in their areas to discuss material received. For more information contact either Dick Jones at Frensham Heights, Rowledge, Nr. Farnham, Surrey, or Graham Moss at 116 Chadderton Way, Oldham, Lancs.

Our General Secretary, Iris Mills of 83 Thorne Road, Thornton Lodge, Huddersfield, Yorkshire, is responsible to the members for all matters relating to finance and to keep the account books, receipts, and bank account in such order as to be easily understood by all members.

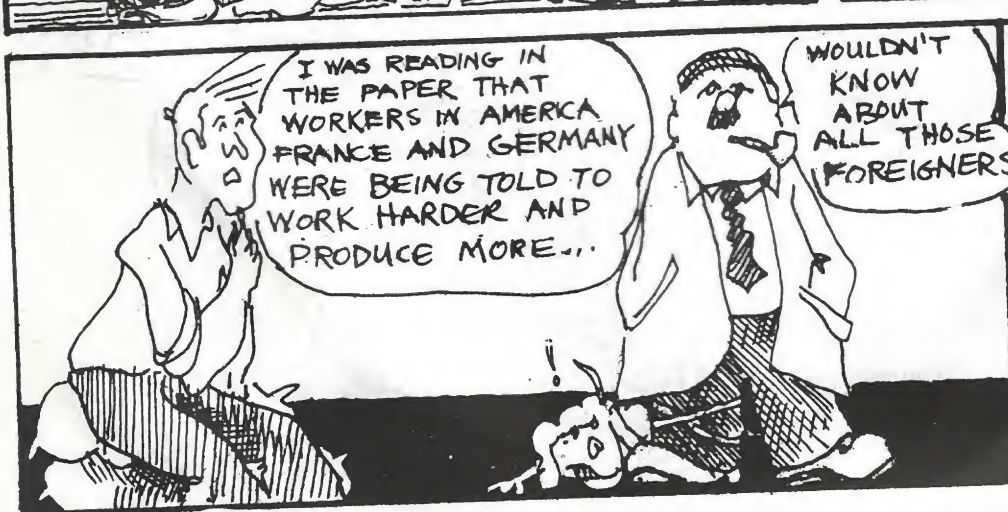
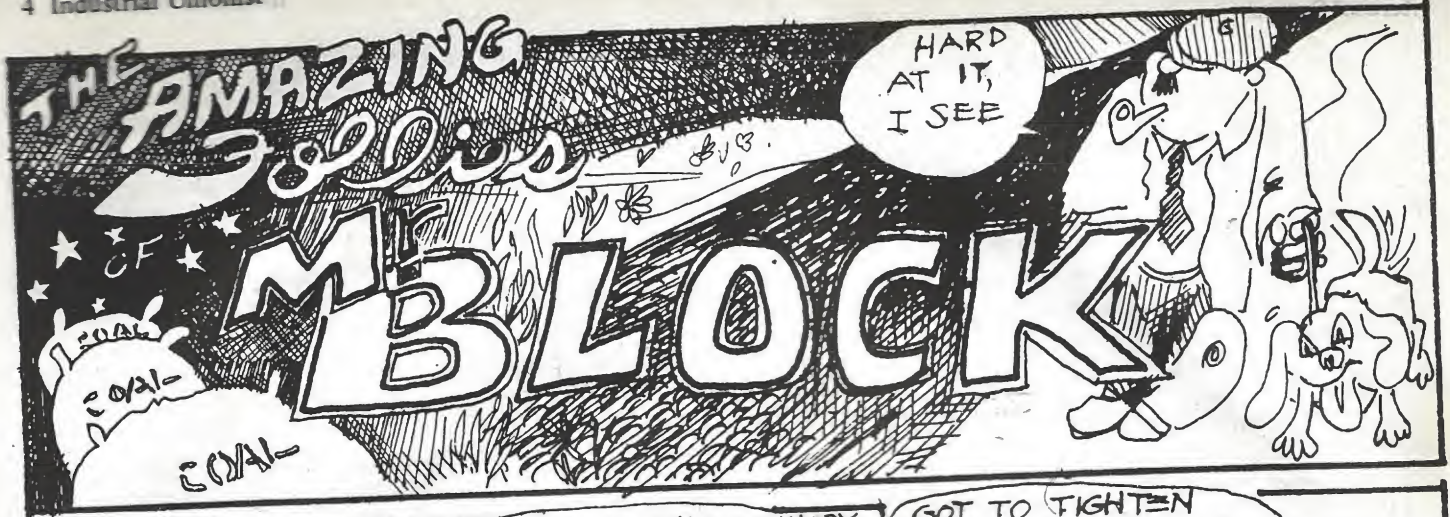
The Literature Secretary, Elaine Godina, 116, Chadderton Way, Oldham, Lancs., is responsible for handling all orders, bulk and individual, of IWW publications, including our monthly paper, THE INDUSTRIAL WORKER, published in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

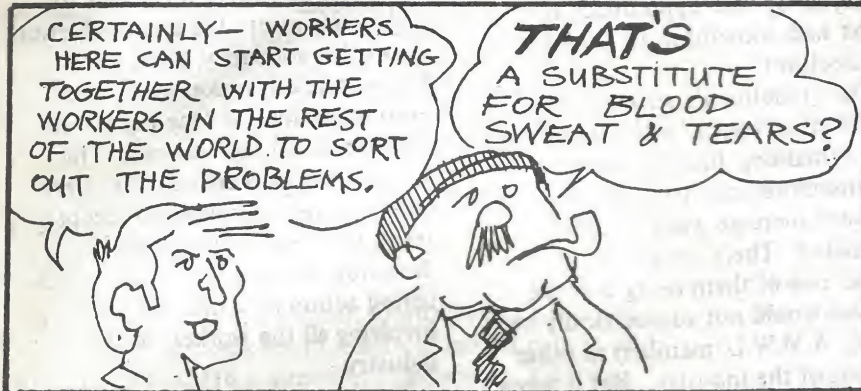
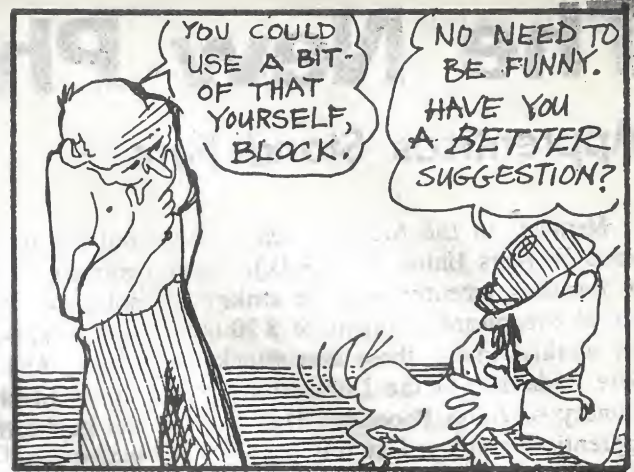
General queries can be addressed to the London area members at Box I.W.3, 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1, or to Bob Lees, 6 Coniston Avenue, Werneth, Oldham, Lancs.

A sample copy of this magazine will be sent to any address you think it might meet with a favourable response, and a sample copy of the Industrial Worker will cost you a 10p postage stamp. Full details of membership in the I.W.W. can be got from any of the addresses listed above.

Our thanks for cartoons to Craig Zeigler, Art Young, Phil Ruff, Ralph Chaplin, Arthur Moyse and the anonymous Solidarity cartoonist. More volunteers welcomed.







MORE X-CITING MIS-ADVENTURES OF MISTER BLOCK

in next issue!

DIALOGUE BY JIM BURNS—ART BY CRAIG ZIEGLER

HI THERE, FELLOW WORKERS!
DO YOU KNOW A
SPECIAL MR. "B"?
YOU'D LIKE TO
SEND A SPECIAL
MESSAGE TO?
JUST TYPE IT UP AND
MAIL TO "MR. BLOCK"
116 CHADDERTON WAY
OLDHAM, LANC'S
KEEP THOSE CARDS AND
LETTERS COMIN'!
BYE-NOW.



The New Phoenix

Apprentices Stand Firm

Members of the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union (A.M.W.U.), in Tasmania recently went on strike for an over-award payment of \$20 per week. Among those that struck were tradesmen at the Launceston foundry of Johns Phoenix. The apprentices employed at this plant — many of whom are A.M.W.U. members — carried on working as required by the terms of their indentures, but soon found that the bosses were demanding they handle work normally done by tradesmen. In other words, they were being pushed into the role of strikebreakers. They therefore decided to strike themselves.

A list of 11 areas of work which the apprentices considered scabbing was drawn up and presented to the management by a combined delegation from the apprentices and the Union in the presence of a member of the Apprenticeship Commission. Management refused to talk to the delegates, and further stated that the Commissioner should speak on the apprentices behalf. On the third day of the apprentices strike telegrams were sent to their parents advising that the Company had applied to have their sons' indentures cancelled.

A few apprentices, under pressure from parents, drifted back to work,

but the majority treated the telegrams as a bluff. Faced with their solidarity the Company backed down and accepted the list of 11 scab areas. And a few days later the Apprenticeship Commission rejected the application for cancellation of indentures. Again, the solidarity displayed by the apprentices no doubt had something to do with this decision.

The tradesmen's strike dragged on for nine weeks, with the apprentices remaining firm in their determination not to scab, and a \$9 per week increase was eventually negotiated. There were strings, of course, one of them being that the increase would not automatically be paid to A.M.W.U. members in other sections of the industry. But it was a victory of sorts and the apprentices played their part in it.

It could be said that the apprentices displayed more real worker solidarity than the trade union movement generally. It seemed logical to them that they should support the tradesmen. It also seemed logical to them that an all-out strike by Johns Phoenix workers throughout Australia would have been much more effective. But many of the tradesmen themselves accept the piecemeal strike methods they use as the only ones open to them. At Launceston they accepted

that other tradesmen — electricians, for example — carried on working when they were out, just as they accepted the normal running of other Johns Phoenix factories at a time when they were engaged in a struggle with the Company.

Little support for the strikers was received from other trade unionists, and the strike fund ran to only \$5 food hamper each week for the workers who were out. Relatives and friends helped in some cases, but most of the strikers were forced to sell furniture and other personal possessions to make ends meet. It's a sad reflection on worker solidarity when this happens, and it makes you realise even more that the One Big Union concept is still the best one. The Launceston workers wouldn't have been isolated, or forced to accept terms way below their original demands, had they been part of concerted action by a militant union involving all the workers in the industry.

But the courage of the apprentices in putting themselves on the firing-line in support of their fellow workers was one of the good things that came out of the Johns Phoenix strike. They had the right idea, and maybe some of the tradesmen now have it, too. Because the right idea about solidarity brings results, as the apprentices found out. When the strike was over and done with one of them said, "We set them back a bit. They didn't think we'd go so far. But we did, and we won."

Bill Graham.

Ralph Chaplin

When the Union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall
run,
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun.
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of
one?

But the Union makes us strong.

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

For the Union makes us strong.

Those words, set to the tune of "John Brown's Body," and no doubt at least partly familiar to most union activists, were written in 1915 by Ralph Chaplin, one of the most prolific of Wobbly songwriters, and a man whose name is enshrined in the history of the organisation. And the message of the song is as relevant today as it ever was, especially now that management everywhere are only too keen to victimise the individual in

RALPH CHAPLIN

the interests of increased production and reduced costs. But let's not fool ourselves into thinking that all workers are naturally aware of the need for solidarity. Chaplin knew only too well that there were major problems to be solved, and ingrained attitudes to be changed:

Serene, complacent, satisfied,
Content with things that be;
The paragon of paltriness
Upraised for all to see;
With loving pride he cherishes
His mediocrity!

The smirking, ass-like multitudes
Cringe down at his command.
With wagging ears and blinded eyes
They do not understand.
With pride they show each shackled wrist
And on each brow the brand.

The work is still to be completed, and that's why Chaplin's poems and songs, and his refusal to ignore unpalatable facts, are valid now.

He was born in 1887, and joined the I.W.W. in 1913. He was active as an organiser, journalist (see his book, *The Centralia Conspiracy*), editor of labour papers, and artist. In 1915/16 a number of cartoons by Chaplin published in *Solidarity* and the *Industrial Worker* showed a black cat leading a Wobbly towards the harvest fields, factories, etc. And his song, "That Sabo-Tabby Kitten," set to the tune, "Dixie Land", celebrated the use of direct-action methods:

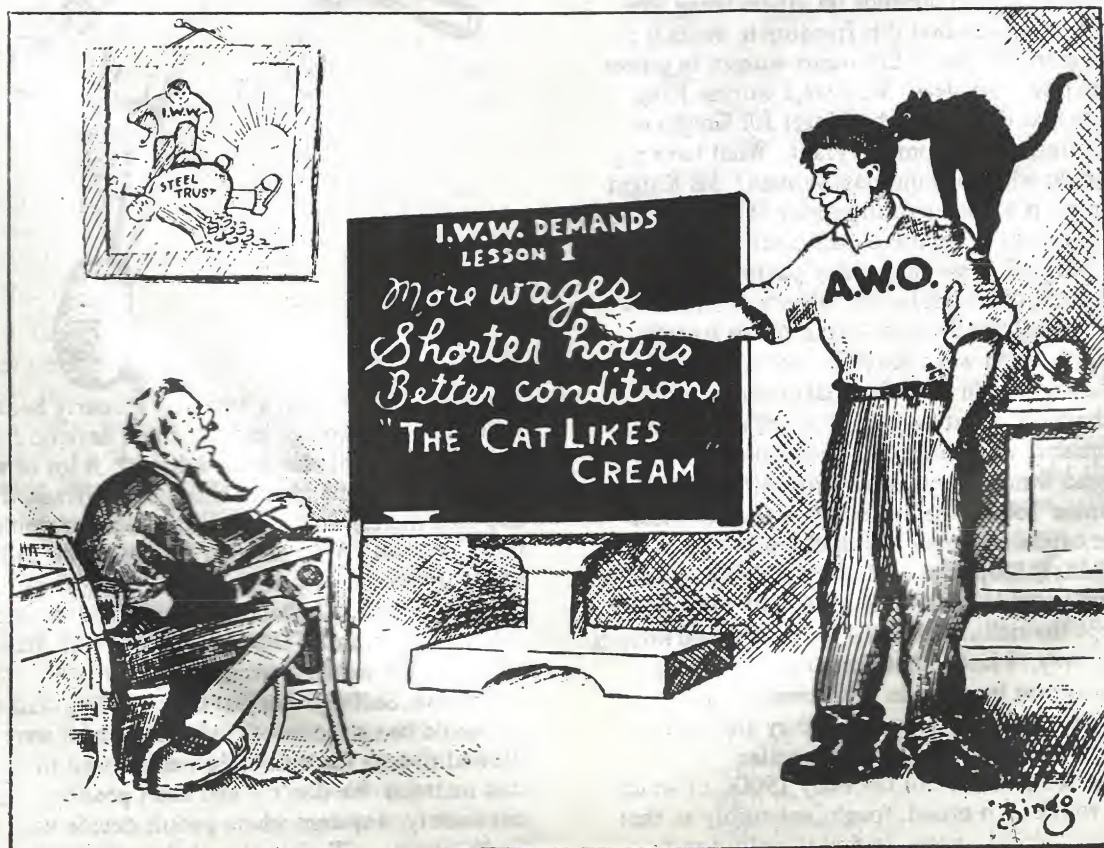
This world should have but free men in it,
Let me show you how to win it,
Hurry now! Wonder how? M E O W —
SABOTAGE!

Chaplin himself said that his "Sab-Cat symbolised the slow-down as a means of striking on the job," and no individual Wobbly was ever convicted of "Sabotage" in the sense of deliberately destroying or damaging property. But it was undoubtedly Chaplin's writings, as well as his position in the I.W.W., which led to him being sentenced to twenty years in prison during the great Chicago trial of 1918.

Released in 1923, Chaplin continued to write, and to play an active part in labour affairs generally. There is little doubt, though, that his best poems and songs nearly all date from his early days as a Wobbly, probably because the problems, and the solutions, were then clearer in his mind. He had a definite view of what his work was for, and once said, "I don't want anyone to try to make me out a "poet" — because I'm not. I don't think much of those aesthetic creatures who condescend to stoop to our level that we may have the blessings of culture. We'll manage to make our own — do it in our own way, and stagger through somehow." And he proved as good as his word by producing "formal" poems as well as songs set to well-known tunes. He wrote the classic, "Mourn not the Dead" (see *The Industrial Unionist* 2), and "November," a poem that commemorates two wobbly martyrs — Wesley Everest and Joe Hill — but is also a re-affirmation of faith in

John Farmer's First Lesson

Solidarity, September 2, 1916.



the cause:

Red November, black November,
Bleak November, black and red;
Hallowed month of Labour martyrs,
Labour's heroes, Labour's dead.

Labour's hope and wrath and sorrow —
Red the promise, black the threat;
Who are we not to remember?
Who are we to dare forget?

Black and red, the colours blended.
Black and red the pledge we made;
Red, until the fight is ended,
Black until the debt is paid.

The thing to remember when reading Chaplin is that his work ought to be seen as a living literature of protest, and not as something from the archives. He said he didn't want to be a "poet" (that is, someone "different"), and I doubt that he's have wanted his writings preserved merely for the sake of history. And, looking around at what needs to be done, I don't think they can be read just in that way. They're a contribution to the present and the future, as well as the past, because Chaplin had a dream:

For we have a glowing dream
Of how fair the world will seem
When each man can live his life secure and free.
And only the corrupt and the debased sneer at dreamers.

Jim Burns.

WOMEN & LIBERATION

Women's Lib is a reformist, even a chauvanist, struggle only. It is a struggle for a woman to be on an equal footing with a man, to have a career, to make as much money as a man does. Translated for a working class woman this means carving out a career for her on a production line and the inequality of earning a miserable wage somewhere and having to work long hours overtime in order to earn a decent wage packet. Why should working class women struggle to be equal with working class men? What is the point of struggling to be equal with somebody who has no rights anyway? — to be as unfree as somebody else?

Nobody can be 'free' in this system — unless they are a member of the ruling class. The Women's Lib movement says it wants freedom for women. But it doesn't act as if it does. It does not appear to understand, for example, that one person's freedom depends on others being free also. Moreover it implies that this freedom it wants is a freedom from men. Women's Lib wants women in power where men are now. Big deal! We have a woman King, women MPs such as the ultra-right winger Jill Knight of Edgaston, and India has a woman Tyrant. What have any of them got to do with working class women? Ms Knight (MP) for example is a vehement supporter of the anti-abortion campaign; is in favour of capital punishment; has proposed the withdrawal of social security payments for the families of strikers, in particular the miner's strike in '74.

The fight is against the System — against this society based on Inequality, on wage slavery — not against Men. Men are just as trapped in the roles that convention dictates for them. It is just as difficult for them to live up to their "masculine" role, to be 'loud, boozing, aggressive, bread-winners' as it is for women to live down to their 'feminine' role, to be 'quiet, sober, meek, house-keepers'. The capitalist system manipulates both man and woman; it keeps the husband tied down to his work-place and home in order to maintain his wife and family; it keeps the rich rich and the poor poor and intends to keep it that way. I know that there there are many working class women involved in the Women's Lib movement but they should beware lest they are misused like their sisters involved with the Suffragettes.

The Suffragette movement of the early 1900s, of which Women's Lib today is so proud, fought ostensibly so that all women could have the vote. In fact it really fought



to change the law that a woman's property became her husband's on marriage and she could have no further claim on it. What else did it achieve? A lot of women were duped by the idea of Universal Suffrage, they fought and died merely so that a few rich women would not loose their fortunes. After all what was the point of fighting for a vote if there was nothing to vote for? Women in the then Colonies (eg New Zealand) had had the vote since the 1890s — had it made any difference there? Had it changed the lot of the working woman or man?

Universal Suffrage was just another ruling class red herring. We would be no worse off today if women were still not allowed to vote (or if nobody was allowed to vote for that matter!) We don't — and can't possibly — have, in this society, a system where people decide what they want for themselves. We just play their game every 4 years,

voting for one or other of the ruling class puppets, while the big business elite decide our fate and enforce their plans with the might of their police force and their army.

Women's Lib has become very 'fashionable' of late; even the ruling class are jumping on the bandwagon. The election of Margaret Thatcher to head the Conservative Party was a carefully planned move to attract the 'Women's Lib' vote. This is just another attempt by the ruling class to take over in order to control the situation. It always controls by the principle of divide and rule — and to divide the working class in half, separating women from

men must be a classical example.

The only way to overcome the inequalities and injustices inherent in this system is to attack the system itself. Some women's groups refuse to allow men into their organisation — which shows their lack of understanding of their situation. I'd rather have the support of a Socialist male than a Fascist female. We are already too divided in our actions, we can only survive through unity.

Iris Mills.

Unemployment

What premier Harold Wilson has referred to as the "white heat of the technological revolution" seems to have left an awful lot of people out in the cold. Automation and computerisation notwithstanding, we still have the dole queue and, as the economic winds blow increasingly chillier, so the dole queue grows increasingly longer. But unemployment and the machine have both been with us for a long time. Just listen, as Thomas Carlyle listened, to the background noise of nineteenth century England. He wrote:

"Hast thou heard the awakening of a Manchester on Monday morning at half past five by the clock, the rushing of its thousand mills like the boom of an Atlantic tide, ten thousand times ten thousand spools and spindles all set humming there?"

The machine, however, were not producing articles for use, but for profit.

"What is the use of your spun shirts? They hang there by the million unsaleable; and here, by the million, are diligent bare backs that can get no hold of them. Shirts are useful for covering human backs; useless otherwise, an unbearable mockery otherwise. You have fallen terribly behind with that side of the problem."

Want in the midst of potential abundance, then and now, because that is how the capitalist system works. Remember the thousands of tons of Canadian wheat destroyed a few years ago because the market price wasn't right? Or think of the food crops being destroyed in Western Europe today for the same reason.

Of course you may think that unemployment and its attendant evils will be cured eventually, that it is simply a question of time. After all, we are sending men to the moon nowadays, aren't we? Perhaps you may not have heard of the large numbers of scientific technicians who were sacked whenever there was a cutback in expenditure on the U.S. space research programme. Many of them had bought new homes and automobiles and ended up heavily in debt as a consequence, since there was a limited market — a buyer's market — for their highly specialised skills. The debt-ridden society goes hand in hand with the alleged age of affluence because most of us have a

& the machine

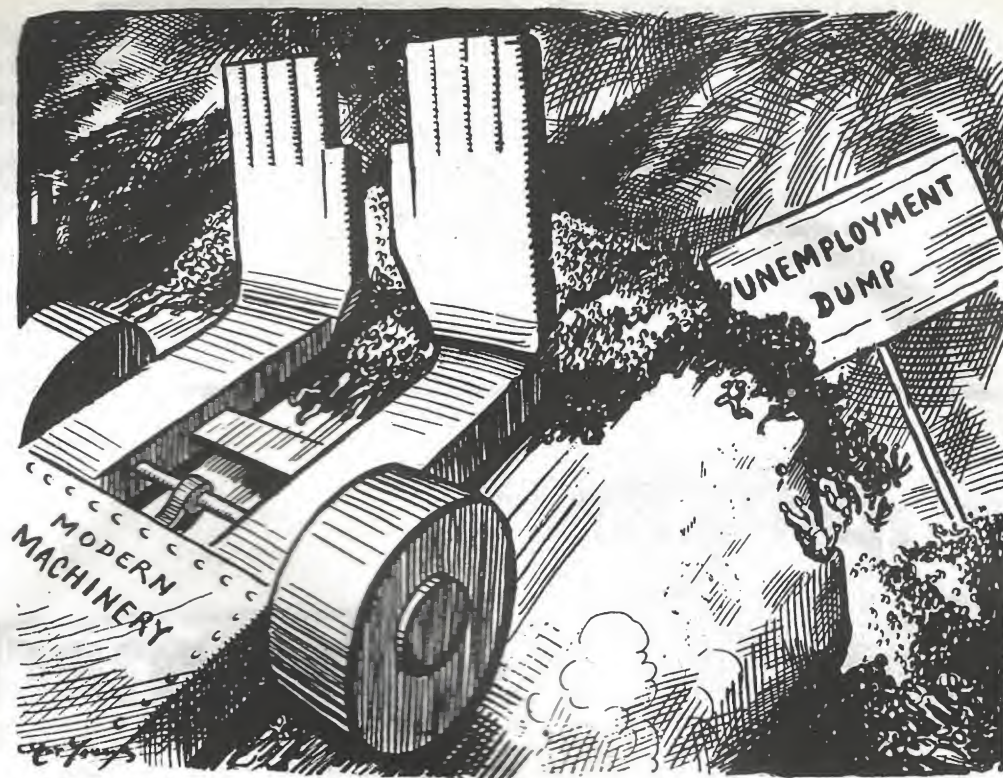
small, flickering screen somewhere around the house and a voice coming from it keeps telling us to buy and keep on buying. That voice is the voice of the capitalist or his proxy offering his wares for sale at a profit; and if the line of goods offered can't be produced to guarantee him a profit, they won't be produced at all, regardless of how many "diligent bare backs" or hungry mouths or unemployed technicians there may be.

Don't be fooled either by the learned-looking fellow with the posh accent who appears on your television screen and tells you that he is working on a cure for unemployment; he is just as much a salesman for capitalism as the huckster on the other channel who is singing a jingle about a can of peas. The learned-looking fellow will show you graphs and charts and curves and tell you that the cure for unemployment lies in adjustment and regulation, a wage freeze here, a pay pause there. Don't believe him; economists employed by the capitalists have been suggesting the same remedies for the ills of capitalism for a very long time. They don't work because if you have a cancerous growth that requires surgery, you can't cure it by administering pills and potions. And capitalism is the cancer in the midst of our society; unemployment, mass starvation in Bangladesh, and other social evils on a national and international scale are symptoms of the disease.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the machine-wreckers or Luddites thought they had discovered a cure for unemployment. They were mainly hand craftsmen who had been thrown out of work because of the introduction of new weaving and spinning machines and thought they could solve the problem simply by wrecking the machines and setting fire to the factories. One of their most popular ditties tells the tale:

Around and around we all will stand
And sternly swear we will,
We'll break the shears and windows too.
And set fire to the tazzling mill.

Of course the Luddites were wrong in thinking that



it was the machine alone that caused their ruin; it was not the machine but the machine-owner and the system he represented. The machine-owners appealed to the lawmakers who passed a law in 1812 making the offence of machine-wrecking punishable by death and thereafter the Luddites were heard of no more.

Another method was tried in Oldham in 1818 when a group describing themselves as "The Poor Weavers of Oldham" addressed a written plea to their employers calling attention to "the wretched situation to which we have a long time been exposed owing to the extreme depression of our wages, and request you to call a meeting among yourselves, and try if there cannot be some alleviation made to our sufferings, by an advance thereof, as you well know they are not adequate to purchase the common necessities of life."

And during that period in England there were economists aplenty like Ricardo and John Stuart Mill who were the forerunners of the quack-doctors of economics who appear on our television screens today. Not that the problem was confined to England. It was just as bad on the European continent as the industrial revolution began to spread and, to take only one example in the USA, the plough patented by James Oliver in 1855 caused large-scale unemployment among farm workers. No matter what country you look at, ever since the industrial revolution began, the story is the same. What is more, unemployment is spreading at present within the industrialised countries of the world; even though we now have the potential, the machines, and the techniques to create a society of abundance, we are still creating unemployment.

Remember the petition of the poor weavers of Oldham in 1818? On November 11, 1974, some 75,000 Danes in a more angry mood marched on Christianborg Palace in Copenhagen as the climax of a nationwide protest against the rising rate of

car firm announced that it is to offer bonus payment to 6,000 more workers who are willing to follow the nearly 11,000 workers who quit the firm earlier in the year. France had more than 500,000 out of work as 1975 began, with the prospect of even higher unemployment figures in the offing. In North America, according to the December issue of the *Industrial Worker*, the official figures were 5,300,000 in the USA and 430,000 in Canada. General Motors, Chrysler, Goodyear, Uniroyal and other firms whose names are household words are forcing their workers onto the pavement.

Will more and better machinery cure unemployment? Or the passage of time make it only a memory? No one who takes a hard look at the evidence would agree. Come the twenty-first century we'll still have the unemployed pounding the pavement, children dying of starvation in India and elsewhere, environmental pollution — if, that is, most of us haven't been blasted off the face of the earth in a nuclear war which none of us want to start. Why can't we manage things for ourselves? We could if we took it into our heads, organised ourselves in a way that would enable us to run production in the most efficient manner to satisfy human needs rather than for the purpose of increasing profits of those who manage the world's resources today. Well organised, we can make the change from being managed to being managers in a bloodless manner by locking out our present managers and carrying on production ourselves. The revolutionary weapon advocated by the IWW, the "general lockout of the master class" is the sanest answer to the problem. Maybe you have heard of William Morris, the old socialist who kept on repeating that before you could create socialism you had first to create socialists. We think that way too because, after all, no matter about the theoretical/textbooks socialism is a state of mind

We have published a pamphlet on the general strike and we think it would be worth your while to read it. Doesn't the following make sense?

"Even at the worst a General Strike could scarcely entail more privation and suffering than one of capitalism's many and all too frequent depressions. The General Strike is saner than insurrection and surer than political action. And beyond it — after the storm — is a scientifically planned and ordered world based on peace, plenty and security for martyred humanity."

By joining us you help work towards that end. You cease to be a part of the problem and become part of the answer.

Henry Bell.

Mr Block up a Ladder

I was leaning on the bar, wondering why the quality of the beer seems to go down as the price goes up, when Mr. Block walked into the room. Now you can't dislike Mr. Block. He's a friendly sort of fellow, and anyway when the pub's empty and he comes over and buys you a drink I suppose it would be bad manners not to talk to him.

"How's it going, Mr. Block?", I asked him.

"Not too bad, not too bad," he replied, "I mean, I can't complain, and if I did I don't suppose anyone would take much notice of a little man like me." He chuckled as he said this because, deep down, Mr. Block likes to think he's got a philosophy of life, one that enables him to shake his head thoughtfully and wear a rueful smile when things don't go as planned.

"And the job, Mr. Block. Still at the same place?"

"Of course, of course. It wouldn't do to leave now, what with them sorting out the older employees. Could be there'll be some spare places further up the ladder, and I might just be in the running for one of them."

The conversation faded for a few moments as the barmaid lifted our glasses and wiped the bar. Mr. Block puffed on his pipe.

"No danger they'll fire you, Mr. Block?," I enquired, and he looked at me with a shocked expression on his face.

"But I've been there twenty years," he said, "and all the management know me well. Why, only last week the Personnel Officer himself told me that if they had a few more like me they could run the place on half the staff."

"What about all those older employees you said they were getting rid of?" I said, "Don't you think they might do the same to you in a few years time?"

"Oh, I'll be further up the ladder then. And anyway, things will be different. This is just a phase we're going through."



"It's worth thinking about, Mr. Block. A ladder only takes so many people. You've got to look to the future."

"I've got my future planned, thank you," he replied.

"I haven't waited twenty years for nothing. Anyway, what can someone like me do about these things?"

"Organise, Mr. Block," I suggested.

"Now, now, we don't need that kind of stuff. It's for trouble-makers and hotheads. Don't tell me you're one of that crowd?"

"Thanks for the beer, Mr. Block," I said, "And watch out for the worn rungs."

Jim Burns

IMPORT CONTROLS



Oldham's Chamber Mill

Seems like the trade union leaders and some of their political friends have hit on another scapegoat. This time they're calling on the government to limit imports of the things that their members produce. They tell an old story; Foreign factories can produce more cheaply than British, and therefore sell their imports here more cheaply. So the argument is that if imports were prohibited or further restricted more British made goods would be sold, because that's all there would be. **IF** the government would take action on an import ban. But let's not get into that.

A British Problem

Not only is there nothing new in the above argument, but it's far from being a problem of British bosses alone. That first paragraph is a direct crib from an article sent to our U.S. paper, the *Industrial Worker*, with 'American' changed to 'British'. Now isn't that peculiar? And it seems too, when you see the Mr. Block story on page , that there is a pretty short answer to the problems of buying and selling across the world. But do the Trade Union leaders see it? No chance!

Chamber Mill

Here in the Northwest, as Textile factory owners find it more profitable to either diversify or produce in their overseas factories, thousands of local workers are either laid off, put on short time or made redundant.

Oldham's Chamber Mill, probably the oldest working Mill in Lancashire, has just been closed up by the owners with a loss of 65 jobs. Small fry to some maybe, but

when the present owners, the Ash Spinning Co., bought it 2½ years ago, there were 140 workers there. And what does the Textile Union Secretary, Jim Browning, have to say about it all? Well, Jim is reported as saying that the company has been as considerate as possible in the circumstances. Is that so? He also reckons "... the industry is bleeding to death and nobody is prepared to put a bandage on it." Well, Jim, there's bandages and bandages. The bandage the boss uses to stop his profits bleeding away is simply to put us out on the street. The bandage we working people can use is one hell of a lot different.

A Couple of Questions.

Why don't these Trade Union leaderships — and their memberships — go to their own kind of people? If we went to our own kind of people, working people that is, and put our case successfully, then dockers at a port of entry might say simply, "You can't dump that cargo here. Turn round and take it back or let it rot." The question must be raised: Do these unions have any real faith in their own people, or would they rather no such thing was tried in case they found they couldn't control such moves?

Better still, why don't these unions, why haven't they extended hands across the seas to their fellow workers in every country in a joint effort to raise standards and conditions of labour everywhere? Even while prostrating themselves to capitalism and nationalism they could say to the government, "Permit imports only of goods where the production wage matches that paid here."

Better than all that, immediately realisable though it may seem, the only practical solution really is in our hands. In Singapore, one of those countries where all this imported stuff is supposed to come from, layoffs in the textile industry are increasing. The same goes for Britain, as we know, and the rest of Europe, and the U.S. as we've already pointed out. So we're all going naked? I hadn't noticed.

Certainly the bosses aren't going to solve the problems of over-production, since they've created it. Certainly the business unions we seem to be saddled with aren't facing up to the problems in a way that can be seen as even half honest to working people. So it's all down to them who do the work — the you and me of it, as you might say.

Frank Carter.

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

After listening for too long as the boss berated us about efficiency problems that were cropping up in our part of the factory, we were glad to see him turn over the floor for suggestions from the group of us.

One of the lads stood forward and said, "Well, earlier you were referring to the bottlenecks in production. Now I have had quite a bit of experience with bottles, and it seems to me that the neck is always at the top."